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Chief Executive Officer

November 9, 2010

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From: William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES' REVIEW

In September 2010, the Chief Executive Office established a team, including consultants, to assess the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in four critical areas, with the goal of enhancing the Department's operational effectiveness. The team focused on:

- 1) **Accountability** – Review the job accountability and expectations for the Regional Administrator (RA) and the Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA), evaluate the consistency of roles and adequate allocation of time spent on managing the critical demands of the units.
- 2) **Alerts** – Evaluate the effectiveness, accuracy, and general usefulness of the alerts. Assess whether the CSWs have the alerts required to effectively manage their caseloads.
- 3) **Policy and Procedures** – Includes policy development, implementation processes, compliance, and configuration of the LA Kids website.
- 4) **Data Review** – Involved a study of the data flow, systems, and reports from different data sources to determine the availability, accuracy, and use of data by various levels of staff.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective And Caring Service"

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The recommendations presented in this report were developed to strengthen the DCFS organization and support the Department's goal of improving the lives of children and focusing on keeping children safe and in permanent families.

The findings and recommendations presented in the attached report provide a framework for an implementation plan to enhance the DCFS organization. If you have any questions, please contact Antonia Jiménez, Deputy Chief Executive Officer at (213) 974-7365, or via e-mail at ajimenez@ceo.lacounty.gov.

WTF:BC:AJ
VKD:cvb

Attachment (1)

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Children and Family Services

Los Angeles County DCFS Review_November2010



Department of Children and Family Services' Review



Chief Executive Office

Department of Children and Family Services' Review

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Acronym Definitions

ARA	Assistant Regional Administrator
ARS	Alternative Response Services
BIS	Business Information Systems
CBO	Community Based Organization
CCR	Child Contact Report
CSA	Child Services Administrator
CFSR	Children and Family Services Review
CWS/ CMS	Child Welfare Services/Case Management System
DI	Dependency Investigator
ER	Emergency Response
ERCP	Emergency Response Command Post
FM	Family Maintenance
FP	Family Preservation
FR	Family Reunification
GRI	General Relief Indigent

ISW	Intensive Services Worker
MART	Multi-Agency Response Team
PCR	Parent Contact Report
PFF	Partnership for Family
PP	Permanent Placement
PWC	Price Waterhouse Coopers
RA	Regional Administrator
SCSW	Supervising Children's Social Worker
SDM	Structured Decision Making
SITE	Statistical & Information Transmitted Everyday
SM	Safe Measures
TA	Technical Assistant
TDM	Team Decision Making
TILP	Transitional Independent Living Plan
VFM	Voluntary Family Maintenance

Executive Summary

This report responds to the Chief Executive Office's (CEO) request that a consultant, with the support of CEO staff, timely assess four areas within the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and make recommendations to enhance operational efficiency.

Focus Areas

The team reviewed the following four areas of focus to better understand existing processes and make recommendations for systemic change -

1. **Accountability** - Review the job accountability and expectations for the Regional Administrator (RA) and the Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA), evaluate the consistency of roles and adequate allocation of time spent on managing the critical demands of the units.
2. **Alerts** - Evaluate the effectiveness, accuracy, and general usefulness of the alerts. Assess whether the CSWs have the alerts required to effectively manage their caseloads.
3. **Policy and Procedures** - Includes policy development, implementation processes, compliance, and configuration of the LA Kids website.
4. **Data Review** - Involved a study of the data flow, systems, and reports from different data sources to determine the availability, accuracy, and use of data by various levels of staff.

The teams were initially given a list of questions that they used to interview staff, from Children's Social Workers (CSWs) to Regional Administrators (RAs). The team interviewed DCFS staff from ten regional offices, covering all five Supervisorial Districts.

Background

The County of Los Angeles DCFS receives approximately 173,000 hotline calls each year and has the third largest caseload in the nation (over 32,000 children). During FY 2010-11, DCFS has 18 regional offices, a budget of \$1.8 billion, and 7,323 positions.

In 1998, Price Waterhouse Coopers completed an audit and provided 80 recommendations on several issues, including: leadership, planning, core programs, and automated systems. Over the past several years, DCFS has studied the recommendations from the audit, frequently reviewed internal processes, and worked to identify and implement solutions. Specifically, the Business Information Systems (BIS) Division has utilized technology to offer a range of automated reports to staff. The Division also created LA Kids, a centralized intranet website, that posts and links DCFS policies and reports. In addition, the Department's Policy Division has worked to more efficiently implement, revise, update, and distribute policies to staff.

The recommendations presented in this report were developed to strengthen the DCFS organization and support the Department's goal of improving the lives of children and focusing on keeping children safe and in permanent families. In addition, the CEO is under Board instruction to hire a consultant to conduct a management audit of DCFS. It is hoped that this document can be used to set the stage for that audit. Highlights of findings and recommendations are summarized below by each focus area, and a more detailed discussion continues in each of the four sections of the report.

Department of Children and Family Services' Review

Findings and Recommendations

Overall, the review is summarized by the following findings and recommendations. These recommendations aim to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of DCFS operations to ultimately lead to improved outcomes for children and families -

Assessment Areas	Findings	Recommendations
1. Regional Administrator Accountability		
a. Emergency Response, Over 60 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Despite significant reductions since July 2010, offices face high number of ER referrals over 60 days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a comprehensive strategy for responding to the ER Over 60 days backlog and share best practices among offices.
b. RAs and ARAs Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAs and ARAs spend 20% and 15% respectively of the time outside of the office. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly define expectations and establish clear measurable objectives.
c. Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainings are too lengthy and are not focused on helping CSWs manage caseload. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate training curriculum and focus on developing training that provide tools to assist workers in managing caseloads.
d. Problem Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARAs are often dealing with problem workers, who require a lot of supervision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop clear expectations, outline performance measures, and hold staff accountable for performance.
2. Alerts		
a. Emergency Response Backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While alerts are helpful, saturating staff with alerts is ineffective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate all the alerts created and determine which ones are critical and develop a process for responding to the alerts in a timely manner.
b. Case Narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSWs are having difficult time entering case contract information into the CWS/CMS system within the 72-hour timeframe. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop tools and training to help CSWs enter and complete the contact and narrative sections.
c. Alerts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no standard process to capture the actions staffs are required to take upon receiving the various alerts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate usefulness of alerts. Develop standard business process and timeframes for responding to alerts. Develop standard reports that track the status of the alerts.
d. System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System is difficult to navigate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide hands-on interactive training on the Cognos system.
3. Policy and Procedures		
a. Policy Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Too many policies being issues; and some are duplicative or contradictory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct inventory of policies; determine the number of policies that need to be updated, consolidated or deleted.
b. Policy Development Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCSWs and CSWs not involved in policy development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include SCSWs and CSWs in the drafting and development of the procedures and policies.
c. Business Process Redesign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies may require that additional steps are added to the existing process; which may or may not be appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the impact on the business process as policies are being developed. Ensure policy implementation steps are clearly mapped out Ensure accountability, up the chain of command, is identified in advance

Department of Children and Family Services' Review

Assessment Areas	Findings	Recommendations
d. Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training is not always readily available with new policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide timely training for all new and revised policies.
e. Enhance Website Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of search function for policies; no historical records. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and re-organize the LA Kids' Policy website; maintain central libraries.
4. Data Review		
a. Caseload Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no standardized tool available to track status of cases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new, standard reports to better manage caseloads.
b. Data Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is not organized in a manner that is useful or easy to use; as a result many ad hoc reports are created. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create one portal. Organize key reports by case flow activity. Create simple standard reports that everyone can use and provide training.
c. Performance-based Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and analysis of key process and outcome measures is inconsistent throughout the Department. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and track key performance measures. Develop and implement standardized data review. Identify and implement best practices.

The remainder of the report is organized by focus area. Finally, this report could not have been accomplished without the full support of DCFS. They were open, forthright, and provided the necessary information to help identify what worked and did not work. In fact, the BIS immediately implemented changes based on our verbal recommendations.

I. Regional Administrator Accountability

Background

This section addresses the team's review of the Regional Administrator/Assistant Regional Administrator (RA/ARA) job accountability. The roles of the RAs and ARAs were reviewed to ascertain if their allocation of time was consistent and adequate to manage the critical demands of their units. The team met with representatives from the Santa Fe Springs, Compton, and Santa Clarita Regional Offices. There are many dedicated RAs and ARAs workers within DCFS that generally have a good working knowledge of the principles of management and supervision.

RAs and ARAs have varying approaches to managing of the Regional Offices. These differences are attributable to the needs of their geographic service delivery areas. In addition, there are certain offices such as Compton that must continuously deal with high staff turnover. High stress levels and distance from employees' homes contribute to the high staff turnover rate. Approximately 29% of the CSWs in Compton have fewer than two years experience.

RAs and ARAs spend (20% and 15% respectively) of the time outside of the office attending community and headquarter meetings as well as mandatory training. While community meetings were perceived as an important aspect of their work, some expressed concerns with the numerous meetings and the mandatory trainings as they keep RAs and ARAs outside of the office. In addition, the mandatory trainings are found to be problematic as it impacts the RAs and ARAs ability to manage their units. Trainings are often too lengthy (a recent 3-day) and are not relevant to the work, as they are more theoretical than practical.

One of the many challenges facing DCFS' Regional Offices is the recent high numbers of Emergency Referrals, primarily those over 60 days. The three offices we visited implemented different strategies for reallocating staff to respond to the ER workload. The manner in which staff reallocations were made appears to have a direct correlation to the significant differences in ER statistics. In some offices, new CSWs are assigned directly to respond to ERs primarily because it has become a critical area within the Department. Other offices are reassigning only highly experienced CSWs to manage ER over 60 days. It appears that offices that have redeployed only seasoned staff to the ER operation are doing significantly better. Coordination of the ER strategies among offices is lacking. In addition, there are limited opportunities to share best practices among the various Regional Offices. It is also important to note that the longevity of the emergency response crisis appears to be slowly creating a back-end crisis. The more personnel devoted to ER functions only, the fewer resources are available for work on the back-end.

Another concern that requires notable mention is that RAs and ARAs are held accountable for workers they did not have a choice of hiring. There are times when they "inherit" problem workers who require a lot of supervision, need to be constantly disciplined and take up a substantial amount of time. The time spent on disciplining staff takes time away from caseload management. The Department should invest the time and resources to appropriately address these issues.

Overall Findings & Recommendations

I. Emergency Response, Over 60 Days	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the many challenges facing DCFS' Regional Offices is the recent high numbers of Emergency Referrals, primarily those over 60 days. Staff realignment should be coordinated to support the ER strategies among Regional Offices. Longevity of the ER crisis appears to be slowly creating a back-end crisis. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an assessment of the ER Over 60 days process to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify business improvement processes without compromising child safety. Develop a standard way to track ER by Regional Offices and county. Document and share best practices within offices. Assess the impact of the high ER caseload on the back end and develop ways to mitigate the problem.
II. ARAs Accountability	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RAs and ARAs spend 20% and 15% respectively of their time outside of the office, which creates problems in managing the Regional Offices. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an assessment of all the required meetings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine which meetings must be attended in person. Develop creative ways to provide the information to Regional Offices without taking staff from offices; for example, Video Conferencing, Conference Call, WebCast, etc. Develop clear performance outcomes to track the overall progress of the Regional Offices.
III. Training	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainings are often too lengthy (recent 3-day) and are not relevant to the work; as trainings are more theoretical than practical. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the training curriculum and develop training to provide CSWs and SCSWs the tools required to effectively manage their caseloads.
IV. Problem Workers	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ARAs often "inherit" problem workers who require a lot supervision, need to be constantly disciplined and take up a substantial amount of time. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop clear expectations for CSWs and SCSWs, outline performance measures and hold these individuals accountable for performance. Appropriately discipline and dismiss CSWs and SCSWs who are not meeting performance management expectations.

II. Alerts

Background

This section addresses the review of the DCFS Alert System. Specifically, the team focused on the effectiveness, accuracy, and general usefulness of the alerts. The team met with DCFS Business Information Systems' (BIS) staff to review the alert design and process; as well as with staff from Santa Fe Springs, Compton, and Santa Clarita Regional Offices to assess the impact of the alert system on frontline operations. A total of 22 DCFS staff comprising of 3 RAs, 12 ARAs, 2 SCSWs, 1 Manager, and 1 Analyst from the BIS; and a Deputy Director were interviewed.

Alerts are system-generated emails that remind staff that specific tasks need to be performed within a specified timeframe. Alerts can be classified into three categories: 1) Emergency Response (ER); 2) Back-end (Family Maintenance/Family Reunification); and 3) External (Court cases). For example, if an ER referral is of immediate nature, the CSW must make contact within one business day. If the referral is of a non-immediate nature, the CSW must make the contact within five business days. DCFS policies require that contact must be documented within 72 hours.

All offices were aware of and use the alerts to manage their caseloads. Depending on their assignment, staff had varying usage of specific alerts since not all alerts applied to their actual assignment. In particular, alerts were found to be helpful when used in conjunction with ad hoc case conferencing with SCSWs and CSWs, and with weekly and monthly status reports. However, the manner in which alerts were acted upon varied by unit and regional office. Furthermore, each RA/ARA/SCSW handled the alert response differently.

Transition from Safe Measures to Cognos

DCFS is in the process of transitioning alerts from the Safe Measures (SM) system to the in-house Cognos system. SM is maintained by the Children Research Center, an out-of-state entity, which results in delays to changes in the system. In addition, we have also learned that:

- SM data is refreshed every 4-5 days and therefore is not current.
- Business rule methodology that defines the alerts is not accurate, which generates incorrect alerts.
- In-house Cognos system is easier to customize.
- SM website is hard to navigate.

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Data/Systems Reviewed

This review encompassed the Safe Measures (SM) system, Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), and the DCFS-operated LA KIDS/Cognos reporting tools. The table below provides an implementation status of each type of alert. Within the ER alerts, DCFS has prioritized Alerts 1-5 (See Table below) for deployment into Cognos. The remaining three ER alerts have been developed but are not of immediate focus.

Type of Alert	Alert	Current System	Implementation Status
Emergency Response ¹	1. Fifteen-day no contact	Cognos	Completed
	2. Two or more prior referrals within the past 12 months	Safe Measures	Oct 2010
	3. Five or more prior referrals		
	4. High or very-high risk referrals		
	5. Prior child fatality referrals		Oct 2010
	6. Five or more prior referrals with no case opening		TBD
	7. Two or more prior referrals within the past 12 months with no case opening		
	8. Prior child fatality referrals with no case opening		
Back-End ²	1. Initial Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) and Agreement completed	Cognos	Completed
	2. Children in General Relief Indigent (GRI) who just turned 18		
	3. Children in GRI who just turned 18.5		
	4. New detention (possibility of doing Team-Decision Making (TDM), Multi-Disciplinary Assessment Team (MAT), etc.)		
	5. New Group Home placement (possibility of doing TDM, MAT, etc.)		
	6. Change of service component to Permanency Planning (PP) for any child over 12 (possibility of doing Permanency Planning Conference, TDM, Transition Conference, etc.)		
	7. Jurisdiction terminated and 14 days passed without case end-dated		
External	1. Upcoming court hearings (from the courts to CSWs & SCSWs). Simple Notice Application System (SNAP)	SNAP	N/A

¹ Children's Research Center was contracted to develop 10 alerts – at this time they have developed eight.

² Primarily designed for the Family Reunification, Family Maintenance, & Permanency Planning units

Overall Findings & Recommendations

I. Emergency Response Backlog	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The County's high Emergency Response (ER) backlog appears to be contributing to poor outcomes in the ER unit, notwithstanding the deployment of the alerts and recent ER restructuring that the Department as well as individual offices have implemented.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Conduct an analysis of how each Office is responding to the Emergency Response, specifically ER over 60 days:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Develop a standard approach for addressing the backlog.▪ Evaluate the impact of moving resources from the back-end to the front-end to mitigate creating problems in other areas.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Develop a comprehensive ER tracking system to measure the County's overall progress.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Increase communication between offices to ensure that the success stories and best practices in one office are shared with the other offices.
II. Case Narratives	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">CSWs are not meeting the 72-hour policy requirement required to enter case contact information into CWS/CMS.Case narrative information is free form and varies in length from one to nine pages and takes anywhere from 20 minutes to three hours to complete.CSWs are not required to input narrative in the case notes section; however, narrative is a critical component of the investigative process.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop tools and resources to help CSWs enter contact information into the system in a timely manner.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Require consistent use of the template to guide the CSWs so that information input is consistent across all regional offices. Provide training that is practical and useful.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Require consistent use of the template and implement training to CSWs on techniques for writing concise and thorough reports (contact input and closing reports).
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Require that CSWs enter information into the narrative section. Develop a policy, form and/or template that CSWs can use to enter consistent and critical information into the Contact Notebook section.

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III. Alerts	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department does not have a standard process in place to capture the actions taken by staff as a result of receiving an alert. 	1. Implement an automated solution to track when alerts have been addressed.
	2. Generate bi-monthly reports capturing alert data that includes: number of alerts received; type of alerts; recipients; and date alerts were sent.
	3. Evaluate all existing alerts to determine usefulness. Review the recommendation of staff to include the following alerts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collateral contacts completed Referrals on children 0-5 years old Children who are in GRI who just turned 16 Notify CSW with a 45-day alert when cases are approaching the 60-day deadline for referral close-out Notify RAs/ARAs/SCSWs when cases are approaching the 60-day deadline for referral close-out Notify RAs/ARAs/SCSWs when there is an incomplete case notes section 180-Days termination of voluntary Family Reunification cases 12-Month termination of voluntary Family Maintenance cases
IV. System	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff possess various degrees of expertise or understanding on how to use the Cognos system, and some have difficulty with navigation. 	1. Provide hands-on interactive training to CSWs on how to use the Cognos system.

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III. Policy & Procedures

Background

This section reviews the DCFS' policy development, implementation processes, and casework flowchart. The goal of our assessment was to identify areas where further improvements, or additional reviews, may be required. During our review we spoke to 21 employees including Regional Administrators, Assistant Regional Administrators, Children's Service Administrators, Supervising Children's Social Workers, and Children's Social Workers. These employees are located in the Belvedere, Glendora, and Lancaster Regional Offices.

DCFS' Policy Section is charged with developing, reviewing, adjusting and circulating policies throughout the Department. There are several form of "official" policy disseminated throughout the Department by groups or individual. Policies are issued through a myriad of publications:

- **Children's Social Worker (CSW) Procedural Guidelines** - Policies related to child welfare matters; overseen by the Policy Section.
- **Management Directives** - Administrative policies (such as policy, ergonomics, illness and injury, etc.); issued by the Administrative Deputy.
- **For Your Information (FYI) Memos** - General announcement on a myriad of topics; overseen by the Policy Section.
- **Action Directives** - Similar to the Management Directives; currently being phased out.
- **Clerical Manual** - Policies and procedures related to clerical functions; need to be updated.

Policy Process

The Policy process includes the development, review, adjustment, and circulation of policies and procedures. This process is briefly described below:

The Policy Section:

- a. Identifies need for new or updated policy based on legislative mandates (both Federal and State), Federal and State regulations, Directives from the Juvenile Court, County Counsel, Appellate Court Rulings, and Executive management instruction.
- b. Develops policy procedure and drafts policy.
- c. Sends to regional management (ARA and above) for review.
- d. Revises policy based on comments from regional management.
- e. Sends to the Policy Review Committee for review/comments.
- f. Revises policy based on comments from the Policy Review Committee.
- g. Sends to the Executive Committee for review and final approval.
- h. Disseminates final approved policies as follows by emailing to ARAs and above; posting onto LA Kids 'policy link'; and posting onto 'what's new link' on LA Kids.

Regional Managers (ARA and above) present the policies to staff via email and regular staff meetings. Many ARAs and SCSWs require staff to sign for the policies that are disseminated and discussed at each monthly meeting.

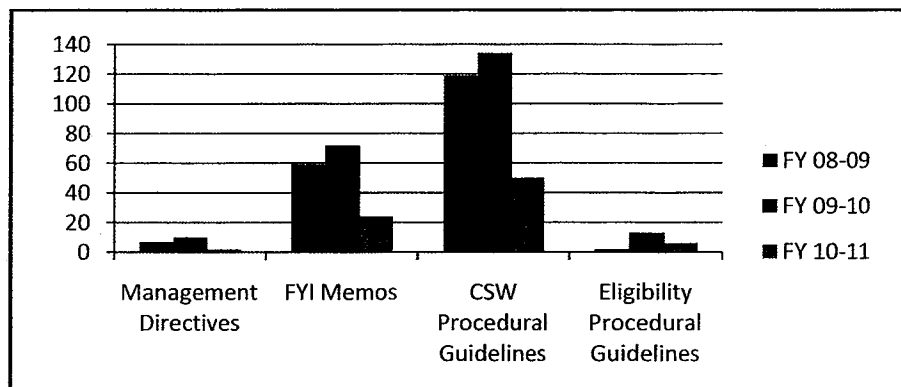
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Statistics

The total number of policies issued has grown over the last three fiscal years. Over 50 ER policies and procedures have been issued this fiscal year. New or revised policies are believed to be quick reactions to external pressures. Policies are global rules that are being modified to encompass a specific set of circumstances that may not be applicable to all cases. It is believed that even the best worker cannot absorb or apply all of the new policy requirements to all of their cases.

Type of Policy	FY08	FY09	FY10 ¹
Management Directives	7	10	2
FYI Memos	59	72	24
CSW Procedural Guidelines	119	134	50
Eligibility Procedural Guidelines	2	13	6
TOTALS	187	229	82

¹ Data collected for July - September



Programs/Processes Deserving Recognition

We noted that the following issues described in the DCFS Management Audit report (dated July 1998), completed by Price Waterhouse Coopers, have been addressed by the Department:

- Policies and procedures are generally contained in one central repository. LA Kids provides one single on-line source for existing policies and procedures.
- The Policy Section has taken several steps to make the layout, development, and distribution process more user-friendly.
- Many believe the process used by the Policy Section is effective and streamlined and represents a significant improvement from past practices. The old revision process took 60 days, while the current process takes approximately 30 days.

Overall Findings & Recommendations

I. Policy Reduction	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Over 50 Emergency Response (ER) policies and procedures (new and revised) have been issued this year.Policies appear to be duplicative or contradictory making it difficult for CSWs to comply with relevant policies.	1. Conduct an inventory of existing policies and determine which policies should be eliminated, updated, or consolidated. Take steps to simplify and streamline policies; use plain language and reduce redundancy.
	2. For those policies that have been streamlined and continue to be lengthy, consider providing a "cheat sheet" to be used as a quick reference guide.
II. Policy Development Process	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Currently, SCSWs and CSWs are not involved in the policy development/revision process. There is a general sense that the Department could face unintended consequences, including sacrificing critical child welfare services, for added workload that may not be as beneficial.	1. Evaluate existing policy development process: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Include seasoned line staff (SCSWs, Intensive Services Workers (ISWs) and CSWs) in the policy development and revision processes.Consider the impact of policy changes on entire operation and align policy with broader vision and goals.
III. Business Process Redesign	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The new/revised policies require a series of additional steps for all cases. These additional steps cause more casework to be provided for some families, and less for others.	1. Streamline and align the policies with the business process; specifically, Hotline, ER Referrals, and child safety enhancements.

Note: The Department acknowledges the need for streamlining policies and began to review several policies in September 2010.

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IV. Training	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training is not always available when new policies or materials are released. Managers, supervisors, and staff have taken it upon themselves to interpret new policies and train staff accordingly. Therefore, the interpretation of policy is not consistent across the Department. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Provide timely and accurate training for all new and revised policies. Ensure the training provides CSWs with practical application of the policies.
V. Enhance Website Capabilities	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No index or search engine available making it difficult for staff to find relevant policies. In addition, the policies may reference forms that are not available on the web link. When addressing policy violations, the Department is unable to determine which policies were in effect at the time. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and re-organize the LA Kids' Policy and Procedure website to improve readability and increase functionality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a search function specifically for policies and procedures on LA Kids. Organize policies to align with Department operations. Create a hyper-link within policies to relevant forms.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and maintain central libraries of all (new and old) procedural memorandums, policies, and directives. Ensure staff are held accountable for only those policies in existence at the time of the alleged violation.

Note: There is a Google Search engine on the Home Page of LA Kids and a limited search function for the policy section.

IV. Data Review

Background

The data team was charged with assessing the availability, accuracy, and use of data by various levels within the organization. Specifically, the team reviewed the usefulness of available data to manage caseloads, data accessibility, and the use of data in performance-based management. More than 250 reports found on the LA Kids portal were reviewed, including The SITE (Statistical and Information Transmitted Everyday) and Safe Measures (SM) websites, as well as the Executive Management Report, and manual logs by CSWs, SCSWs, and ARAs. The team interviewed 31 staff from the San Fernando Valley, Metro North, South County, Vermont Corridor, and Administration offices. DCFS has a considerable amount of data has created a significant number of reports available to staff through multiple data systems.

Data/Systems Reviewed

Major DCFS reporting systems include:

- COGNOS (via LA Kids)
- Executive Management Report
- Family to Family Reports
- MyARA (via LA Kids)
- Safe Measures (SM)
- The SITE

Links to most reports are available on the LA Kids website. The SITE and SM are two primary data systems used by DCFS to retrieve reports from the California Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS). Most of the data available from both systems can be filtered by region, office, supervisor, and social worker.

The SITE

The SITE is accessible to all staff and includes the daily and monthly status of various operations. The SITE updates data from CWS/CMS daily. DCFS staff indicated The SITE is useful in tracking staffing, caseloads, and the movement of cases within ER or FM/FR. The SITE offers a menu of 73 reports that are organized by the following categories:

- Utilization Reports
- Operations
- Abducted and Runaway Kids System (ARKS)
- Placement Reports
- CWS/CMS Utilization Individual Reports
- Hotline ER
- Youth Development Services
- Revenue Enhancements
- Emergency Response Command Post (ERCP)

Safe Measures (SM)

SM offers a broader view of trends and also provides several reports on ER case flow and SDM compliance. Most data on SM can be viewed by month, and trends may be displayed across a specific time period. SM updates data from CWS/CMS twice a week. A data dashboard is available for referrals, cases, SDM, and the CFSR. Executive management use SM regularly to monitor trends within their bureaus. Half of the offices interviewed mentioned that RAs, ARAs, and some SCSWs use SM regularly to monitor trends, track compliance, and compare units and offices.

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Executive Management Report

The BIS also provides executive management with quarterly reports on:

1. Safety - Abuse rate in foster care
2. Permanence - Days in care, exits from foster care
3. Permanent Placement (PP) initiative and new entry
4. Referrals and Removals

While these reports are very detailed, they do not include many of the key measures included in The SITE and SM. The Department has not defined standard reports to manage the regional offices; therefore, from January through September 2010, BIS developed 120 ad hoc reports; special requests ranged from special Board inquiries, data needed for program planning and grant writing, and contact information needed for mailing and invitations.

Process Measures by Activity

SM and The SITE provide useful information; however, it is difficult to navigate these systems. In addition, the data systems are updated at different times, making it extremely difficult to compare data from one system to another.

For example, in order to analyze ER measures across different regional offices, data had to be retrieved from different systems at different reporting times (see Table below).

Comparison of ER measures for 18 DCFS offices.

	Monthly Avg. ER caseload (Goal 21)	No. of all open referrals by date	SBM Safety Assessment completed timely	Total referrals over all days	Total case openings (SM/PP)
	8/10 The SITE	as of 9/16/10 COGNOS	7/10 Safe Measures	as of 9/16/10 COGNOS	as of 9/8/10 THE SITE
West San Fernando Valley	21	209	33%	0%	11%
Glendora	20	442	48%	14%	11%
Santa Clarita	21	440	36%	20%	13%
El Monte	15	188	33%	21%	11%
Pomona	18	360	31%	28%	15%
Lancaster	18	444	30%	28%	20%
West Los Angeles	20	357	48%	31%	6%
San Fernando Valley	17	670	44%	31%	13%
Torrance	21	599	43%	32%	8%
South County	19	1,104	37%	36%	8%
Belvedere	19	896	37%	43%	12%
Metro North	17	849	47%	43%	11%
Pasadena	19	927	37%	48%	7%
Santa Fe Springs	19	955	29%	50%	9%
Palmdale	19	742	17%	52%	17%
Vermont	20	1,174	27%	56%	16%
Compton	22	1,374	38%	61%	14%
Department average	19	707	38%	41%	12%

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Notable observations in offices visited, based on chart above

- **San Fernando Valley Office** – San Fernando Valley is below the DCFS average of 41% of referrals over 60 days - with an over 60-day referral percentage of 31%. CSAs work closely with RAs to develop reports and communicate information to an integrated team. The ARA in this office also supervises teams made up of both front- and back-end staff.
- **South County Office** - South County is below the DCFS average, with 36% of their referrals over 60 days. South County staff spends a lot of time reviewing ER investigations and assessments with CSWs. The South County indicated that for high and/or very high risk cases as assessed by the SDM Risk Assessment, the ARA has the authority to close those cases (*based on policy 0070548.10 which allows for the ARA to approve a change for cases that meet one of five criteria, including high/very high level cases*). This allows them to maintain a lower over 60-day referral percentage.
- **Metro North** - Metro North is slightly above the DCFS average, with 43% of their referrals over 60 days. High turnover rates and younger CSWs may contribute to such differences.

Programs/Processes Deserving Recognition

DCFS has made considerable efforts to collect data and create numerous reports through multiple systems. In addition,

- Management and staff have strong technical/program knowledge that is essential to the operation
- There is good collaboration and teamwork among staff and the BIS team

Overall Findings & Recommendations

I. Caseload Management	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CSWs lack useful tools to monitor and track their cases. BIS spends significant time on extracting data and creating ad hoc reports to assist staff with case and/or administrative management. Reports from multiple systems display information inconsistently. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new standard reports that all offices can use to better manage caseloads such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tracking ER child contacts. Tracking ER closed referrals and promoted referrals to FM/FR.
II. Data Access	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data is not organized in a way that is most useful, and it is often cumbersome for staff to know which reports to use from which site. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create one portal to integrate the most useful reports from the various data systems. Organize key reports by activity (e.g., Hotline Referral, Emergency Response Investigation) to simplify the use of data by all staff. Create a simple user's guide and conduct targeted training for all staff to improve accessibility and usefulness of data.
III. Performance-based Management	
Overall Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and analysis of key process and outcome measures is inconsistent throughout the Department. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and track key performance measures that align with the Department's strategic direction. Develop and implement a standardized method to review data on a regular basis to better understand and improve operations. Identify and implement best practices within the department based on the review of data.

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Next Steps

Develop a comprehensive plan to manage the implementation for the recommendations listed. In addition, the comprehensive plan should include the tracking of existing motions (such as the recommendations from Michael Gennaco, Office of Independent Review, and the data analysis request) as well as major programmatic initiatives such as Title IV-E. We will need to work with the board and external constituents to identify priority focus areas.

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VI. Attachment

Four main activities of the DCFS case process are outlined in the following chart.

